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ABSTRACT

Despite their great geographic, economic, and demographic diversity, Asia-Pacific countries share many common challenges and pose many common issues that are fundamental to improving the quality and relevance of technical-vocational education and training (TVET) as a means of human resource development (HRD). Because of their great need for sustainable development, Asia-Pacific countries must focus their vision beyond the concept of HRD and the tradition of skills training in TVET and must instead consider a coherent strategy for human development in the region in which TVET plays an important role. Among the critical issues that must be considered when planning TVET programs to develop Asia-Pacific countries' human resources are the following: population growth and urbanization; poverty and lack of income-generating capacity; increasing demands for literacy and secondary and technical education; and pollution and environmental degradation. TVET can serve as a catalyst of change for human development throughout the Asia-Pacific region provided the following steps are taken: replace traditional TVET curricula and delivery systems with a broader-based, flexible curriculum that integrates vocational and general education and that is delivered through a multidimensional approach; incorporate new education/training technologies into TVET programs; and increase international and regional cooperation to strengthen TVET for human development. (MN)

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**ASIA-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP
FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TVET**

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ASIA-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP
FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TVET

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1. INTRODUCTION

Colombo Plan Staff College for Technician Education (CPSC) Manila, is a regional organization for improving the quality and relevance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Asia-Pacific. CPSC is entirely devoted to the cause of strengthening training, research and development activities in TVET in its nineteen member countries. Established in 1973, it occupies a unique position in the region as it provides leadership and encourages innovations in TVET through:

- a) curriculum development and curriculum renewal;
- b) training and upgrading of teachers and teacher trainers for improving quality;
- c) integrating emerging areas of concern into TVET curriculum for sustainability and globalization; and
- d) promoting the concept of human development in the region.

CPSC carries out its programs through partnership and collaboration with member countries and many international agencies for maximizing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Over the last twenty-three years, CPSC has contributed significantly in developing TVET in the region. CPSC's regional research and training activities enabled us to identify the issues, problems and strategies which are critical for effective human development through TVET. This paper is devoted to exploring the experiences related to emerging directions for human development through TVET and pinpointing some of the elements of success with a focus on Asia-Pacific countries.

2. ASIA-PACIFIC SCENARIO FOR DEVELOPMENT

In spite of great geographical, economic and demographic diversities among Asia-Pacific countries, they share many common challenges and pose many common issues which are fundamental to improve the quality and relevance of TVET to gain a competitive edge in the market economy of the 21st century. The *Asian Development Outlook 1996/97*, prepared by ADB, points out that the developing Asia, during the past decade recorded remarkable buoyant economic performance achieving an overall growth rate of 7.9 percent in 1995. There were, nevertheless, large variations and disparities in economic growth within and between the countries in the region. In some of the countries, poverty is widespread. What strategic policy measure is necessary for converging the growth rate amongst the countries in the region? The Human Resource Development (HRD) theory, developed over the past decade,

provides a useful direction for addressing this question. It recognizes the role of HRD and innovations in education and training for socio-economic growth.

Technical-vocational education and training are areas of major interest in Asian countries, especially in those reflecting a singular economic growth like those in South-East Asia and China. Most countries in the region regard TVET as being pivotal to their development as it is intimately linked to job creation, employment provision, income-generation and life skills-training.

The growth in the enrolment in technical/vocational education, as a percentage of secondary education, is a salient feature in the countries of the region. The increase in the number of students is most apparent in countries whose economies are in transition or rapid growth, such as in South-East Asia and China. This sketch of Asia-Pacific countries does not adequately reflect the fact that in spite of human resource development, most of the countries in the region are far behind in *Human Development*.

3. NEED FOR GOING BEYOND HRD AND MOVING TOWARDS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Considering the need for sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region, it is necessary to focus our vision beyond the concept of human resource development (HRD) and the tradition of skills training in TVET, and must consider a coherent strategy for human development in the region. TVET has a much important role to play in such a strategic planning process. The *UNDP Human Development Report 1992* clarified the concept of sustainable human development. If the development is to widen the range of peoples' choices, it must do so not only for the current generation but for future generations as well. The 1994 Human Development Report stated:

"To address the growing challenge of human security, a new development paradigm is needed that puts people at the centre of development, regards economic growth as a means and not an end, protects the life opportunities of future generations and respects the natural systems on which all life depends".

Subsequent Human Development Reports have ranked the 174 UN member countries on an objective measure of socio-economic progress and prepared the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI of a country measures three basic dimensions: (a) health and average life expectancy of people; (b) literacy, education and skills; and (c) income-generating capacity and purchasing power of people.

ESCAP in 1995 also examined the issue of Quality of Life (QL) in Asia-Pacific and identified the basic components of QL as *health, education, working life, physical environment, family life, community life, and cultural, spiritual and leisure life*.

The HDI has attracted much attention from the economic planners and academic communities. But the relevance of the three basic dimensions of HDI for TVET is yet to be adequately examined and integrated into the curriculum of TVET programs in the region.

UNDP Human Development Report 1996 points out that though significant progress in human development has been achieved in some of the East-Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Thailand, many other countries, particularly in South-Asia and in the Pacific, are lagging far behind. TVET has the potential to enhance human capabilities and enlarge peoples' choices. The benefits of TVET need to be more equitably distributed between men and women, and between rural and urban areas. With the development of appropriate productive skills, opportunities for employment and self-employment could be enhanced to ensure an improved quality of life. Some of the critical issues for human development and quality of life in the Asia-Pacific region would include:

- a) population growth and urbanization;
- b) poverty and lack of income-generating capacity;
- c) increasing literacy and demand for secondary and technical education;
- d) pollution and environmental degradation.

Population Growth and Urbanization

By the end of the century, the world population will number around six billion. Most of them will be in Asia. Thirteen "mega-cities" with more than ten million population each will grow in Asia in the next twenty-five to thirty years. High rate of population growth, added with the rapid growth of urban slum population, poses new challenges in the developing countries. Women are also being encouraged to move into the industrial labour force by government policies that promote access and seek to integrate women more fully into the development process. The trends in population growth, feminization of the labour force, mass movement towards the urban centres raise a unique issue in human development.

Poverty and Lack of Income-Generation

With population growth, there is an increase in poverty in the region. World Bank estimates indicate that in 1995, the Asia-Pacific region has approximately 800 million people living in poverty. A large number of them is in South-Asia. 50% of the people in India and Pakistan live below the poverty line. Poverty alleviation is a major development challenge in some parts of Asia. Poverty rates are disproportionately high among female-headed households, minority groups, and elderly people.

To promote effective strategies for the elimination of poverty among population groups in Asia-Pacific countries, efforts are needed to develop income-generating skills among the people in the vulnerable groups.

Increase in Literacy Rate and Demand for Secondary and Technical Education

All countries in the region have adopted the policy of Education for All by 2000. However, the statistics underline two basic issues. The first is the trend towards an increasing number of out-of-school children and youth whose absolute number has grown to well over 350 million. This trend is more visible in South-Asia. The second basic statistics show a phenomenal growth in the enrolment in secondary education and technical and vocational education. The percentage of female students enrolled in

TVET has also witnessed a significant increase in some Asian countries. Both the groups' capacity to generate income need to be harnessed.

Developing economies in Asia, particularly in East Asia, are continuing to prosper, leading to a changing lifestyle, education aspirations, living standards and use of modern technologies. On the other hand, poverty remains one of the critical problems in some of the countries in the region, particularly in South Asia. Skill-development for improving income-generating and self-employment capacities will be a key factor in the quest for improving the quality of life in all the sub-regions of the Asia-Pacific.

Pollution and Environmental Degradation

Pollution and environmental degradation has phenomenally increased in Asian countries, along with industrial development and population growth. Agenda 21 of the UNCED made it clear that "education is critical for promoting sustainable development". Proposals in Agenda 21 focus on re-orienting education and training at all levels towards sustainable development. Integration of environmental education in the curriculum of technical and vocational students and teachers is an urgent global need and has to be addressed effectively through the TVET curriculum.

4. TVET AS A CATALYST OF CHANGE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The question of how to reduce unemployment, under-employment and also reduce mismatch between skills and jobs, while simultaneously creating new productive jobs and improving the quality of life of the workers, are some of the core issues that are the concern of human development. TVET can address some of these issues through effective reforms and implementation of curriculum, innovative teacher-training and strengthening skill-development programs for income-generation.

Curriculum Reforms for TVET in the 21st Century

Skills and competencies necessary to meet the above challenges will not be achieved through the traditional curriculum and delivery systems of TVET. A multi-dimensional approach may be necessary to meet the objectives. These include:

- more broad-based and flexible curriculum replacing skill-specific technical training programs;
- integration of work, training and education in cooperation with industries and private sectors;
- life-long and flexible learning to enable the workers to meet the demands of higher and varied demands of the job;
- integration of vocational education and general education;
- development of multi-lingual and communication skills;
- increased emphasis on development of work ethics, teamwork abilities and human values;
- incorporation of attitudes, family values and many other non-technical competencies in the TVET curriculum for proper development of human beings.

New Trends in Technologies of Training for TVET

New technologies of education and training and development in information technology can go a long way to facilitate the process of TVET curriculum reforms for the 21st century and improving human development. Satellite communication, electronic media, computer technology, and telecommunication are introducing a fundamental shift in the nature of education, training and information dissemination for quality of life. In the new context, the teachers would interact differently with students; more as guides or mentors and less like lecturers. These new information technologies and their appropriate applications are being progressively introduced in many countries. However, TVET do not yet make full use of these new technologies of training. The world is being served by a rapidly expanding grid of satellite, television, computer-accessed international and local networks. Distance learning should form a major strategy for human development in Asia-Pacific countries.

5. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR STRENGTHENING TVET FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

International technical cooperation and assistance are very necessary for sharing experiences, planning and implementing staff training, research and development for improvement of the role of TVET to accelerate the process of human development. Inter-governmental and international organizations, as well as the development banks, have greatly expanded their operations for the development of human resources in the region. These have to be geared towards a more comprehensive human development program. CPSC, for the last twenty-three years, has provided assistance to its nineteen member countries in TVET curriculum reform, environmental education, teacher-training and in improving the management of TVET institutions. It consistently addresses emerging issues related to TVET to go beyond the basic HRD.

6. CONCLUSION

Human development and quality of life depends on making the society environment-friendly, scientific, and technologically-based. This would mean integration of broad-based environmental education, science and technology knowledge at all levels of education and training. Literacy, primary and secondary education will be the base of TVET. We must improve the quality and relevance of TVET for human development. The quality of technical and vocational education is the single most important factor for improving the productivity of the labour force and increasing its income-generating capacity. It can go a long way in improving health and safety of the workers and social harmony. Internationalization of technical and vocational education is a process that prepares the TVET graduates to work and live successfully in an increasingly interdependent world.

The task of human development is a multi-dimensional task and must be undertaken in close partnership with government, non-government organizations and international agencies. Industry and private sectors must join hands in the process of human development. CPSC has worked closely for the last twenty-three years not only with its 19 member countries but also with a vast network of institutions and organizations. Our experience gives us an edge to continue the partnership path.